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REP. LARSON VOTES TO GIVE HOPE TO MILLIONS SUFFERING FROM CHRONIC DISEASES BY EXPANDING STEM CELL RESEARCH

WASHINGTON- Today, Congressman John B. Larson voted in favor of the Stem Cell Research Enhancement Act (S.5) that will give hope to millions of Americans suffering from chronic diseases by greatly expanding stem cell research. The House passed this critical bill this afternoon by a strong bipartisan vote of 247 to 176.

◆ Democrats promised that they would offer Americans hope and take our country in a new direction. Today, Members of Congress from both sides of the aisle joined together to help put patients first, by passing the Stem Cell Research Enhancement Act. Embryonic stem cell research is promising and could provide new and better treatment and cures to many who are suffering with chronic diseases like diabetes, Multiple Sclerosis, Alzheimer's, Parkinson's and ALS. By our vote today we can give hope to over 100 million Americans suffering from these debilitating or life-threatening diseases.

◆ Each year, people impacted by such debilitating diseases come to Washington from around the country to advocate for stem cell research. Each year, many of my constituents from Connecticut come to my office sharing their hope for expanding federal funding for stem cell research. This important research could lead to a cure or treatment for a disease affecting them or their loved one. This issue is also a personal one for me, as my own mother suffers from the chronic and debilitating illness of Multiple Sclerosis. It will be gratifying to tell those that visit my office to share their personal experiences and my own mother, that the 110th Congress has taken a serious step forward to expand this life-saving research.

◆ Over 70 percent of the American people support expanded stem cell research and I hope that this year the President will reconsider his veto threat and listen to the overwhelming voice of the American people and a bipartisan majority in this Congress and sign this bill.◆

This bill would expand the federal funding for embryonic stem cell research by lifting restrictions on the embryonic stem cell lines that can be used for federally-funded research ♦ restrictions that were imposed by President Bush in 2001. Most of the stem cell lines authorized for federally-funded research under the President♦s policy are now no longer useful for research. However, the bill only authorizes federal research funds for stem cell lines generated from embryos that would otherwise be discarded by fertility clinics. The bill also creates an ethical framework that must be followed in conducting this research under the guidance of the National Institutes of Health.

The bill is supported by more than 500 organizations, including the American Medical Association, AARP, Association of American Medical Colleges, and Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation, as well as many faith-based groups.

This stem cell research bill passed in the 109th Congress, but unfortunately was vetoed by President Bush in July 2006. In January, the House had passed a similar bill (H.R. 3) as part of the ♦100 Hours Agenda.♦ The Senate then passed S. 5 in April. By passing the Senate-passed S. 5 today, the House is sending the bill directly to the President♦s desk.

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